

15 Reproducible Activities for Reinforcing Business Ethics and Values

Peter R. Garber

VISIT...

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Introduction

Business ethics and values have been in the news a great deal recently. Corporate scandals concerning ethical violations have hit the headlines exposing serious crimes committed by officials and leaders of organizations. This lack of ethics and values has caused a serious erosion of confidence in corporate America.

However, there are countless other organizations that operate their businesses with the highest of ethics and values. Unfortunately, these organizations do not receive the same notoriety and publicity for their ethical practices as those that violate these principles. Business ethics will always be an important core value for the success of any organization. These activities have been designed to support these principles in organizations and strengthen the ethical policies and practices of organizations.

These activities will enable participants to better understand the importance of ethics in all aspects of life. These activities will help participants explore their personal beliefs and values concerning ethics as well as the role that ethics and values plays in business.

Using these Activities

Each activity presents a unique concept or principle to be explored by participants. Thus, these activities can be utilized as separate and distinct activities. However, you will also find it beneficial to use any of these activities in conjunction with one another. Several of the activities that are specifically related to one another have also been identified. A facilitator's guide precedes each activity, providing guidance for presenting the activity. Also included are debriefing points to be reviewed with participants after the activity is completed. As these materials are reproducible, you have permission to make a copy of the activity handout for each participant in attendance. Each activity handout provides all the information and written materials needed for participants to complete the exercise.

Activity 1

Your Personal Code of Ethics

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

To help participants conceptualize and develop their own personal code of ethics.

DESCRIPTION

Participants are asked to write their own personal ethical philosophies and standards by which they lead their lives.

TIME

20 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 1 Handout—Your Personal Code of Ethics

PRESENTATION

1. Introduce the activity by explaining that each of us has our own ethical standards and philosophies that provide guidance to us in our daily lives.
2. Explain that our personal code of ethics is not something that can be dictated to us by anyone else, although there do exist important influences in our lives that help shape our personal ethics.
3. Read the introductory paragraph to the activity out loud to the group.
4. Have participants write down their own personal code of ethics on the handout.

DEBRIEFING

Do not ask anyone to specifically share what he or she wrote down in this exercise unless he or she volunteers to share this information with the group. Ask more general questions of the group such as:

1. Was this a difficult activity for anyone to complete? Why or why not?
2. Does anyone see any differences or even conflicts between their own personal code of ethics and that of their employer?
3. What kind of problems could these differences create for both the individual and the company?

Activity 1 (continued)

4. How can you deal with this “ethical paradox” you might face at work?
5. What problems or conflicts did this paradox create?
6. Have you ever known someone who had two completely different sets of ethical standards concerning his or her personal and professional behaviors?
7. Is it possible to truly have these two sets of ethical standards without this inevitable conflict existing as a result of this paradox?

Conclude the activity by emphasizing the importance of ethics in all aspects of our lives. Ultimately, it is our own personal code of ethics that we must rely on and that guides us throughout our lives. No one can change or take away from our own personal code of ethics, unless we let them.

Activity 1 Handout

Your Personal Code of Ethics

Each of us has our own personal code of ethics created by all our past experiences. In the space below, describe your personal code of ethics. Be honest with yourself and reflect how you really live your life concerning ethics. This is not going to be framed or chiseled in stone; its purpose is to help you better understand the ethical standards and paradoxes that our complex world presents us each day of our lives and how we can better deal with these challenges and dilemmas. Your personal code of ethics is constantly developing and evolving. Life's experiences and circumstances can dramatically change our beliefs and perceptions and ultimately our ethics as well.

[illegible]

Activity 1 Handout (continued)

How does your personal code of ethics influence your daily personal life?

How does it influence your professional life?

Is your personal code of ethics always the same in your personal and professional lives?



Activity 2

Measuring Ethics

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

To have participants think about how ethics might be measured in more conventional ways by using the analogy of an “ethical ruler.”

DESCRIPTION

Participants are asked to answer a series of 12 questions relating to possible ethical dilemmas that they might be faced with in their lives. Answers are given in terms of the scale presented on the ethical ruler.

TIME

30 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 2 Handout—Measuring Ethics

PRESENTATION

1. Explain to participants that measuring ethics can be a very difficult challenge at times.
2. Emphasize that there are not always precise measuring tools available to measure ethics such as a standard ruler that you might use every day.
3. Ask participants to imagine that there could be such a device. It could be called the ethical ruler.
4. With this concept in mind, have participants answer the 12 questions in the Activity 2 Handout.
5. Participants should use the ethical scale found on the ruler on their questionnaire to answer the questions.
6. After everyone has completed the questions, review the debriefing questions with group.

Activity 2 (continued)

DEBRIEFING

1. As in question 1, if your boss tells you to do something unethical, are you still responsible for your actions?
2. Is it unethical to not report overtime hours as in question 3? If your supervisor thinks you are able to complete your assignments within your normal working hours, is it right to deceive him or her in this way? Would it be fair to you?
3. Aren't open office designs with shared workspaces and cubicles rather than private offices actually intended to allow information to be shared with one another? If you should accidentally overhear something, as suggested in question 5, is it really your fault or part of the design of the office setting?
4. In question 7, does the fact that it was a romantic message sent in the e-mail make it any less right or wrong to use the company's computer network in this way? What other issues might these types of communications between co-workers create?
5. How could you continue on your present "course" if you accidentally discovered that it would be useless to do so as might have been the situation in question 8? Assume for the purposes of this discussion that there is no way that your boss would become aware that you had seen the confidential memo. Would this make your decision any easier concerning what choice you would make?
6. Doesn't everyone "inflate" their resumes just a bit, as was the case in question 9? Isn't that the way the "game" is played, and if you don't, might you be selling yourself short?
7. Does it matter what the person's position is with the company in determining if sharing this information was unethical or not in question 10?
8. Is there really any difference between what is occurring in question 11 versus question 12? Aren't both activities gambling?

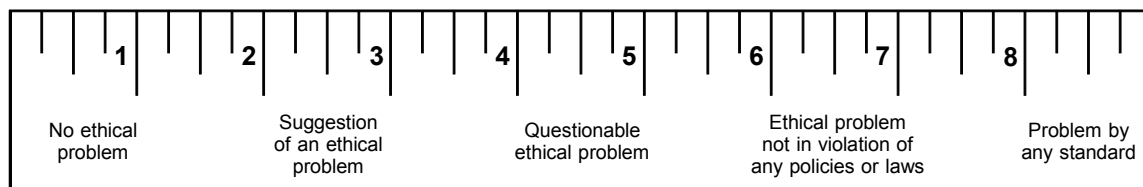
Activity 2 Handout

Measuring Ethics

THE ETHICAL RULER

The ethical ruler is much the same as any other measuring device you might use every day. With a standard ruler, you can easily find the exact length of something simply by placing it along side the object you wish to measure. The ethical ruler can be utilized in much the same way. However, like most other things concerning ethics, how something measures along this ruler is not as absolute as the physical length of an object or person. There will always be those shades of gray subject to interpretation. However, the ethical ruler can be useful in adding a frame of reference for measuring ethics in an organization. For some circumstances, the ethical considerations are cut and dry, making the use of this ruler obvious. Other situations will be far more complex and not easily measured according to anyone's ethical standards. Think of different situations you might have faced and see how you feel each one would measure according to this ethical ruler.

THE ETHICAL RULER



USING THE RULER

As you can see, the ethical ruler progresses from one end of the scale where there is no ethical problem in any way to the opposite extreme of having a definite ethical problem that would be in violation of the laws of society or the policies of the organization or possibly both. The areas in between, of course, are the shades of gray and as always are the most difficult to accurately measure.

You can use this ethical ruler to help you make better or at least clearer ethical decisions in a similar manner as you would a conventional ruler. For example, say that you were faced with the following situations. How would you evaluate each circumstance using this ethical ruler?

Activity 2 Handout (continued)

Circle the answer you feel best applies in each situation.

1. Your boss asks you to change some numbers on a financial report to stay within budget on a big project.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No ethical problem	Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard

2. At the company's request, you spend a number of hours at work soliciting donations in the community for the annual United Way Fund Drive.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No ethical problem	Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard

3. A person works all weekend long to complete a big project on schedule without reporting any overtime hours because she is afraid the boss will think that she can't get her work completed during normal working hours.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No ethical problem	Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard

4. A person makes a copy of a computer program at work for his or her own personal use at home.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No ethical problem	Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard

Activity 2 Handout (continued)

5. You overhear a colleague talking on the phone in the cubicle next to you about something that would help you close a big deal that you have been working on for several months. You decide to use this information without telling the other person what you heard or asking permission to do so.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
No ethical problem		Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard	

6. An employee of a large corporation frequently makes calls on company time from his office concerning his own small business he operates out of his home.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
No ethical problem		Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard	

7. A young man sends a romantic e-mail to a woman in another department, who he is interested in dating.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
No ethical problem		Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard	

8. Your boss asks you to put a report on his desk. As you do this, you inadvertently see a document containing information that is highly confidential and not intended for you to see. Although you did not read its entire contents, you saw enough to know about something that was about to happen that would have a great impact on you. A decision you were about to make would be significantly affected by this information. Should you change your mind concerning these actions you were about to take in light of what you just accidentally learned?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
No ethical problem		Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard	

Activity 2 Handout (continued)

9. On his resume, a young professional makes his previous positions sound like he had more responsibility than he really did.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
No ethical problem		Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard	

10. A person calls his cousin, advising her to buy stock in the company where he is employed when he hears rumors at work that the stock is going to split.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
No ethical problem		Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard	

11. You buy a “chance” in the office Superbowl pool for a dollar.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
No ethical problem		Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard	

12. You are approached about buying a number in the office lottery being started by a co-worker in your department. Each week everyone is to put in one dollar for each chance. The winner will be the person with the number closest to that drawn for the State Lottery each week. Because you work in the headquarters of a large company, the payout for the winning number can be thousands of dollars because there are so many people playing this office lottery.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
No ethical problem		Suggestion of an ethical problem		Questionable ethical problem		Ethical problem not in violation of any policies or laws		Problem by any standard	

Activity 3

The SERP Model

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

The SERP Model is designed to demonstrate that policies and practices concerning ethics in an organization are not always the same.

DESCRIPTION

The SERP Model illustrates that what an organization Says, Expects, Reinforces, and Practices are often not the same. In the activity, the SERP Model is presented showing how these four critical factors might be perceived as moving in different directions. In the second presentation of the SERP Model, all of these critical factors are shown as moving in the same direction and supporting one another.

TIME

20 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 3 Handout—The SERP Model

PRESENTATION

1. Explain that the SERP Model represents that what an organization Says, Expects, Reinforces, and Practices may be very different, at least in the perceptions of its employees.
2. Have participants read the descriptions of each of these elements of the model in the handout.
3. Review with participants the first SERP Model showing the arrows all pointing in different directions. Give an example of how these arrows might be pointing in different directions concerning an ethical issue that an organization might face. For example, an organization might **say** that honesty and integrity are important in an ethical policy but **expect** their employees to do whatever is necessary to get a sale including stretching the truth about the product or service. The organization may actually **reinforce** this behavior by providing raises or bonuses for those who are most successful in these behaviors. Eventually, these behaviors become the standard **practices** of the organization.

Activity 3 (continued)

4. Review the second SERP Model showing all the arrows pointing in the same direction. In this case, what the organization Says, Expects, Reinforces, and Practices are all the same. Emphasize that each of the elements of the SERP Model must be addressed by an organization if it ever really expects to change its ethical practices. To address only one aspect of the policy, such as Says, will not have much if any impact on changing the ethics of an organization. Unfortunately, this is how many organizations try to address their ethical problems.

DEBRIEFING

Ask participants the following questions:

1. How does the SERP Model apply to your organization?
2. Is what your organization Says is important consistent with what it Expects, Reinforces, and Practices?
3. Which of the four components (Says, Expects, Reinforces, or Practices) of the SERP Model does your organization need to address the most?
4. What can be done to make all the arrows point in the same direction in your organization?

Activity 3 Handout

The SERP Model

In the SERP Model, there are four factors that are viewed as most important to supporting the ethics of an organization.

In this model, SERP represents what the organization:

S= Says

E=Expects

R=Reinforces

P=Practices

Let's look at each of these factors of the model in more detail.

Says. What does the organization say is important concerning ethics? This is usually found in the organization's ethical policies. This may be a highly publicized policy statement or document or could simply be something filed away in a drawer somewhere. By itself, what an organization says is less important to its overall impact on ethics in the organization than the other components of the model that follow.

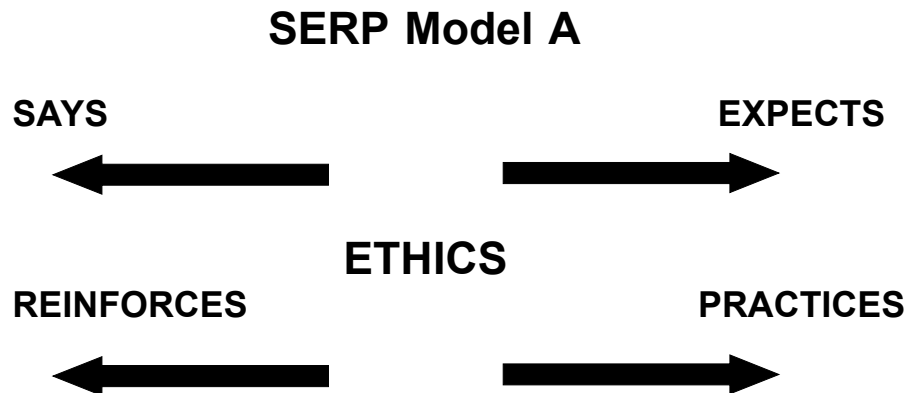
Expects. This goes beyond what is stated in any corporate policy or memo concerning ethics that might be issued. This is what the organization "really wants." This is not to say that what the organization says and expects cannot be the same, rather this is not always the case. In the later circumstance is where you find the more experienced employee taking the new worker aside to explain, "...how things are really done around here."

Reinforces. What is the "payoff" for ethical behavior? Is ethical behavior reinforced or instead punished in some way by the organization? These reinforcers (or lack thereof) can be quite subtle. For example, say that the organization places tremendous pressure on its employees to be successful. This can create a "win at any price" attitude among employees. To the extent that the organization reinforces and thus nurtures this behavior tells employees what is really expected. Ultimately, you get what you reinforce people for doing. If you only reinforce results and completely ignore the behaviors that lead to reaching these goals, there might be no attention paid to "how the game is played." What is reinforced by the organization says more about its ethical and value systems than any policy statement they might issue.

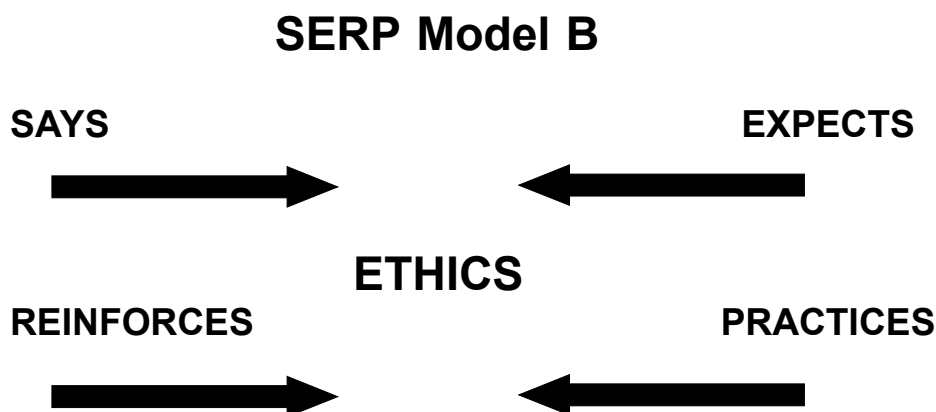
Practices. Practices are what actually occur in an organization as a result of all the above. They are formed either consciously or unconsciously by the organization. Practices are the bottom line of ethics. They are where the "rubber meets the road." Regardless of what the corporate ethics policies state, it is the practices of the organization for which it will

Activity 3 Handout (continued)

be ultimately held responsible. Obviously, practices do not occur in a vacuum. If an organization wants to change its practices, it can't just say that is what it wants. What needs to occur is that what it Says, Expects, Reinforces, and Practices need to all be consistent with one another. The illustrations below show this relationship and interdependence between these factors of the SERP Model.



The SERP Model above illustrates what happens in an organization when what it Says, Expects, Reinforces, and Practices concerning ethics are all going in different directions. There is no consistency in the application of any of these factors affecting the ethics of the organization. Each is operating on its own with little or no relationship to the others. In these situations, what the organization says, what behaviors are expected, what is reinforced, and what it practices may each be completely different and independent from one another.



In this case, each of the components of the SERP Model is focused on the same thing. In this case, what the organization Says is important is consistent with what it Expects, Reinforces, and Practices. The organization's ethics policies are not just nicely framed documents found in the company's reception areas, but are the standards by which it operates. In other words, all the arrows must be pointing in the same direction for ethics to truly be a part of an organization's culture and the way that they do business.

Activity 4

The Realities of Ethics—Case Study

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

To provide participants with a realistic example for discussion purposes of what actually might happen in an organization concerning business ethics.

DESCRIPTION

Participants are asked to read a brief case study concerning a young man who is told by a manager of the company to do something unethical.

TIME

30 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 4 Handout—The Realities of Ethics—Case Study

PRESENTATION

1. Set the stage for this activity by explaining to participants that the reality of ethics is that sometimes people in higher positions in an organization ask or perhaps even demand that subordinates act unethically.
2. Explain that the case study they will read during this activity involves a senior manager in an organization ordering a young man who works for him to do something unethical, even perhaps illegal.
3. Have participants read the case study then review the debriefing questions with the group.

DEBRIEFING

Ask participants the following questions concerning the story they just read:

1. Suppose the customer Frank White told the salesperson on the telephone to falsely promise a longer guarantee did give them a very large order. If the issue of the extended warranty never comes up as White predicted and no one is really “hurt” by it, was this a good strategy or an unethical false promise?
2. If you answered that it was unethical, do you see any “shades of gray” in this situation? What if Frank White was sure there would not be any problem making this promise, would this change how you feel about these actions?

Activity 4 (continued)

3. If you were the young man delivering the report to Frank White, what would you do concerning changing the numbers as ordered?
4. Let's assume that the young man did change the numbers on the report and the falsified version was sent to the governmental compliance agency in Washington, D.C. If these falsifications were discovered, who do you believe should be held responsible? (The answer is that this would depend on a number of factors such as the government agency they were dealing with, the state laws in which the company operated, etc. However, potentially both could be held responsible, but the burden would probably fall heaviest on Frank White.)

Activity 4 Handout

The Realities of Ethics—Case Study

Part of the reality of business ethics is that sometimes people do get what they want by breaking the rules. At times, it might appear that is the only way to get ahead in business or remain competitive. Read the following case study and decide for yourself what the consequences might be for these questionable ethical business decisions.

Case Study

Frank White was considered to be a tough, hard-nosed businessman by his friends and enemies alike. However, by any measure he had many more enemies than friends. He was not only thought of as tough but also unscrupulous. He would stop at nothing to be successful. He would run over anyone who might be unfortunate enough to get in his way. Ethics were not important to him. His only measure for what was appropriate or not was what he thought he could get away with doing.

The company was aware of how Frank White operated. While many of his actions and behaviors were not consistent with corporate policy, he did get the job done. Frank was one of the few managers who year after year met or exceeded their performance goals. This was very pleasing to the company.

“Mr. White will see you now,” the secretary told the young man nervously clutching a report in his hands. As the young man timidly entered the office, he could hear Frank White screaming into the telephone, “I don’t care what you’ve got to do—just make sure you close the deal!” Mr. White was silent for a few moments as an eerie calm came over the office as if just waiting for the storm. Then he exploded again this time with a force that took the young man back a few steps toward the door.

“I don’t give a damn what you tell the customer. Tell him that we will guarantee our product for five years longer than the competition if that’s what it will take to get their business,” he bellowed into the telephone. He listened to something again surprisingly patiently considering the mood he seemed to be in.

After several minutes, he began to speak softly, almost in a whisper into the telephone as if to prevent anyone from overhearing what he was about to say, “I realize that our company’s guarantee policy is only for five years, but who’s going to know if you promise the customer ten years? I’ll be retired by then and you will probably be in some other big job and all this will be somebody else’s problem. That is unless you’re getting soft on me.” More silence, then White said, “Okay, that sounds good. Call me when the deal is completed.”

Activity 4 Handout (continued)

By now the young man was petrified. He was still clutching the report he had delivered, but wasn't sure for a moment why he was there.

"What do you want?" Mr. White demanded of the young man as he glared at him.

"You asked for this report to be delivered to you right away," the young man managed to stammer out as he gently placed the papers on the large mahogany desk and turned to try to escape unscathed from his first face-to-face encounter with the infamous Mr. White. He felt more like he had just encountered an angry grizzly bear in the wilderness during mating season than one of the top executives of the company.

"Wait just a minute, let me make sure I understand this report before you run off," White demanded as he began to review the document just handed to him. After a few minutes of study, he said, "I don't like these numbers on this report you just gave me. Change them so that we look like we are in compliance with the regulation," he slides the report across the top of his desk within reach of the young man.

"But sir, this is a report we have to send to the federal government. Wouldn't it be illegal to falsify this information?"

"They're nothing but a bunch of pencil pushing bureaucrats in Washington. I've been dealing with them longer than you've been alive. They have to require us to submit all these reports to justify their existence. Most of the time they don't even read them. Even if they do, they don't have a clue what all these numbers really mean. You just change the numbers and let me worry about Washington. Now do what I told you. I want a revised report on my desk first thing in the morning."

Activity 5

The New Product—Role Play

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

We play many roles as we face the ethical paradoxes of our lives. An effective teaching tool to learn more about how to deal with these challenging situations is through role playing. Role playing allows us to simulate real life situations in the “safety” of the training environment. Through role playing, we can learn valuable lessons without having to “pay the price” of life’s real consequences. Role playing provides an excellent opportunity for people to come face-to-face with hypothetical questionable ethical situations and explore how they might react if it were real life.

The scenario for this role play is general in nature. In other words, the work setting and details of the positions and people involved are not specifically identified. Suggest to participants that it would be helpful to transpose their own work setting and examples into the roles that they play in this exercise. They should feel free to customize the role play as much as needed in order to adapt it to real life examples with which they are most comfortable and familiar.

DESCRIPTION

This role play involves a customer and supplier. In this role play, the supplier is about to introduce a new product. The customer is evaluating the benefits of purchasing the new product versus staying with the current model they have been using successfully for a number of years. In both role play parts, each person is faced with a number of ethical decisions concerning their interaction with the other.

TIME

45 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 5 Handouts: Part 1—Supplier’s Role and Part 2—Customer’s Role

Activity 5 (continued)

PRESENTATION

Read the following to participants to introduce the role play:

In this role play, the supplier is meeting with a customer to try to keep their business. The customer is evaluating the benefits of continuing to do business with the supplier. In both role play parts, each person is faced with a number of ethical decisions concerning their interaction with the other.

Divide participants into pairs. Let each pair decide what part each person will play, either that of the customer or the supplier. Each participant in this role play should be given the Activity 5 Handout for his or her part. After they have been given adequate time to review their part, the role play is to begin. When the role play is completed, review the discussion points that follow.

DEBRIEFING

After the role play has been conducted, review the following discussion points that relate to this situation and the roles that each person in the activity played.

1. Was there anything unethical in either of the positions or actions that either the supplier or customer took?
If yes, what were some of these shades of gray?
2. Where did the “lines” of what was simply a good, sound, smart business decision become blurred into these shades of ethical gray?
3. From your perspective, whose actions do you think were the most unethical?
4. What would you suggest could have been done to avoid the ethical gray areas and still meet each party’s business objectives?
5. What do you think might have been the “risks” to the objective of remaining totally honest and ethical with each other?
6. Do you think maintaining a certain standard of ethical behaviors is worth these risks?

Activity 5 Handout

The New Product—Role Play

Part 1: Supplier's Role

Your company is about to introduce a brand new product line. There is some concern about making obsolete the current line due to the new technology that will be introduced in this new product. Because the customer you will be talking with during this role play has historically bought large volumes of the present product in the past, you are somewhat concerned about his or her response to this new product. At this time, your company still intends to offer both the old and new product lines. However, the long-term future of the old product might be somewhat questionable. If the old product is discontinued, the availability of parts will eventually become a problem. The decision to continue to offer the old product will be determined by the demand for it by customers.

Your supervisor is pressuring you to get this customer to continue to buy the old product line. Because of their large purchasing volume, their continued interest in the old product line represents the best chance to keep it on the market. This would in turn allow your company to continue to supply parts for other smaller customers who understandably would be very upset if they were no longer available. If necessary, you have been authorized to offer a discounted price to the customer to keep their business concerning the old product line. However, your supervisor has told you to do this if it is the only way to prevent losing the customer's business. During this meeting with the customer, you hope to reach the following objectives:

- To find out more about this customer's long-term objectives and how you can continue to serve them.
- Most importantly, you want to keep the customer's business.

In addition, you have a number of concerns about the meeting with this customer.

1. You are not sure that this strategy is serving the best interest of the customer. You struggle with the direction you are getting from your supervisor to push the old product line rather than the new line with the customer.
2. Related to this concern, you wonder what the customer's loss in growth and productivity might be in the long term if they only look at the short-term advantages of staying with the old product as you are going to direct them.

Activity 5 Handout Part 1 (continued)

3. You are a little worried about their interest in continuing a long-term relationship with your company. During the past few months, you have had some subtle indications that there could be some problems and that this account might be in jeopardy. You discussed this with your supervisor who did not seem to share your concern.
4. You wonder if you should even tell the customer about the new products at this time for fear that they might not give any more orders for the old line.

Activity 5 Handout

The New Product—Role Play

Part 2: Customer's Role

A major supplier to your company has asked for a meeting with you to discuss your future purchasing plans of their products. You suspect that the supplier is going to try to get you to increase the amount of products you will purchase next year and you are reluctant to discuss this with them. The reason for this reluctance is that you are presently considering changing to a different supplier for these purchases. It will be several more months before a final decision can be made concerning this change. In the meantime, you have been told not to change what you are currently buying as the new supplier's products will involve some significant conversion expenses. There would be no sense in experiencing the costs to convert to any new products if you are going to go with a different supplier later on.

Your company has been experiencing loss of profits due to problems with the current product line, which hopefully will be corrected by the new supplier's new technology. Because of this situation, you have been told to ask for a discounted price to continue purchasing the supplier's products at the present time.

Furthermore, your boss has suggested that you not tell the current supplier about your negotiations with the new company. The thinking is that they might not be as willing to discount their price if they feel you might not be a long-term volume purchaser. Also, your boss has reason to believe that if your company doesn't continue to purchase these products, the supplier might not continue to produce them very much longer. This could cause you a number of problems in the interim before the conversion to the new supplier's product is completed. If you can help it, you have been advised to not even bring up these rumors about the supplier's new product line if not brought up by him or her.

Your objectives during this meeting are:

- To get as big a discount in price on the current products as possible from the supplier.
- Not to scare off the supplier by telling him or her that you might be considering another supplier at this time.
- For the time being, keep the supply of the current product available to you.

Activity 5 Handout Part 2 (continued)

You also have a number of concerns about the meeting with this supplier:

1. Your company has had a good relationship with this supplier for a number of years. You are somewhat uncomfortable with not being totally honest about your possible intentions to switch suppliers. You realize that this could have an impact on their production planning, inventory control, etc.
2. You also are not sure if it is fair not to give this supplier a chance to keep your business. Perhaps their new product might be better than the one that the new supplier can produce. At least you have a successful track record and history with them and the new supplier is really an unknown at this point.

Activity 6

Who Gets the Credit?—Role Play

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

We play many roles as we face the ethical paradoxes of our lives. An effective teaching tool to learn more about how to deal with these challenging situations is through role playing. Role playing allows us to simulate real life situations in the “safety” of the training environment. Through role playing, we can learn valuable lessons without having to “pay the price” of life’s real consequences. Role playing provides an excellent opportunity for people to come face-to-face with hypothetical questionable ethical situations and explore how they might react if it were real life.

The scenario for this role play is general in nature. In other words, the work setting and details of the positions and people involved are not specifically identified. Suggest to participants that it would be helpful to transpose their own work setting and examples into the roles that they play in this exercise. They should feel free to customize the role play as much as needed in order to adapt it to real life examples with which they are most comfortable and familiar.

DESCRIPTION

Who does get the credit for great ideas in business is often a very interesting question. In truth, really good ideas are as rare as the key to the executive washroom and are often fought over like a bone among a pack of stray dogs. However, often it can be very difficult to accurately identify just where ideas truly originated. Many times a good idea is the result of many people’s inspiration and contributions. Other times, someone rushing into the spotlight to enhance their own status and position in the organization outright steals ideas from the true originator. This role play is about who gets the credit for a really good idea—the boss or the employee.

TIME

45 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 6 Handouts: Part 1—Supervisor’s Role and Part 2—Employee’s Role

Activity 6 (continued)

PRESENTATION

Read the following to participants to introduce the role play:

Unfortunately there are no patents or copyright protection within an organization concerning an individual's ideas. Usually the only regulation for the protection of people's ideas is the ethical standards of those who the organization entrusts with this valuable information. The most common occurrence of this problem of idea ownership can exist between supervisors and their subordinates. Employees may often hear their bosses presenting an idea to other people that they could have sworn they originally suggested. Bosses sometimes even have the audacity to present these ideas to the subordinate they originally stole it from! It is as if they are officially announcing that ownership of the idea has completely been transferred to them. The subordinate's options at this point are typically extremely limited.

This becomes a classic lose/lose scenario for the subordinate. If the subordinate says nothing, they have no chance of getting any credit for the idea. On the other hand, if he or she confronts their supervisor with this accusation of stealing their idea, the situation can be very career damaging in itself. This problem can be exasperated by the perceptions that both the boss and employee have of the idea. The boss may feel that he or she developed a basic concept that their subordinate originated but could not make a reality. Without his or her vision and skill, the idea would have remained just a clever passing thought that someone who worked for him or her had one time. They may also feel that it is part of the subordinate's role to provide him or her with fresh and original ideas. This would be similar to a speechwriter who fades into the background once the presentation is made, allowing the speaker to get all the applause.

Divide participants into pairs. Let each pair decide what part each person will play. In this role play, there are parts for a supervisor and the employee. We find them in the situation described above. The employee feels that he or she had come up with a great idea to improve the efficiency of the operation and is now hearing his boss present a very similar concept as if it was his or her own. They are going to discuss this situation with one another and hopefully come to some understanding that will be acceptable to each of them.

Each participant in this role play should be given the Activity 6 Handout for his or her part. After they have been given adequate time to review their part, the role play is to begin. When the role play is completed, review the discussion points that follow.

Activity 6 (continued)

DEBRIEFING

1. How ethical do you believe the supervisor's actions were concerning the ownership of this idea?
2. Based on what transpired in this role play, do you think the supervisor did indeed steal this idea from the employee? Why or why not?
3. How common do you think this type of "stealing" of ideas is in business?
4. Why is it so hard to identify or ultimately prove who should get credit for great ideas?
5. Should it really matter?
6. Why do you think an employee might not do anything about having his or her great ideas taken by others particularly their bosses?
7. How could this situation have been handled differently?
8. How might you have reacted if you were in this employee's situation?
9. How might you have reacted if you were in this supervisor's situation?
10. Does this supervisor really have any legitimate defense concerning his or her actions?
11. Do you think that this employee would share future ideas with his or her supervisor? Why or why not?

Activity 6 Handout

Who Gets the Credit?—Role Play

Part 1: Supervisor's Role

You are very excited about presenting your idea to the executive committee of your company. You have prepared an elaborate presentation with charts, graphs, and projections concerning how much money your plan will save the company. You are certain that this is going to be a real “feather in your cap.” Maybe this is what you needed to get that promotion to the next level of management that you have been hoping to receive.

You have asked someone who works for you to listen to a practice run of the presentation to help you prepare. This employee may also be able to give you additional insight into the potential advantages of this proposal as he/she has worked closely in this area. In fact, this person may have even helped give you the idea for this proposal, at least according to him/her. You became aware that this was his/her perception during a meeting earlier in the week. In fact, he/she got somewhat upset that he/she wasn't getting credit for the idea. You explained to him/her during this discussion that it really didn't matter whose idea it was as what really was important was the savings it could give the company. As you told this person at that time, you really can't remember how you first came up with this idea.

You are hoping that this meeting will help make this person feel better about this proposal by playing a part in helping develop the presentation, if even in this small way. In order for this proposal to really be successful, it will require the entire team working together on its implementation. This individual due to his/her extensive knowledge needs to play a key role in these efforts.

The role play is to deal with this potential conflict that exists between you and this employee. You are to introduce the fact that you want to go through a “dress rehearsal” of this presentation with him/her. Your objective during this role play is to bring to some resolution the question of “ownership” of this idea. You feel that your future working relationship with this employee might be dependent on your success in bringing closure and hopefully resolution to this problem.

Activity 6 Handout

Who Gets the Credit?—Role Play

Part 2: Employee's Role

You just received a message from your boss that he/she wants to meet with you concerning the big presentation next week. This upsets you because you feel that you are not being given credit for originally coming up with the cost-saving idea in the first place. Your mistake apparently was telling only your boss about this concept and no one else. Before you knew it, the boss was going around telling everybody about his/her great idea.

You confronted your boss about this situation earlier this week. Of course he/she has no recollection of your giving him/her the idea for this project. He/she tried to tell you that it really didn't matter who got the credit for the idea. If that was really true, why doesn't he/she give you your rightful credit? You are also a little upset that the boss is asking you to help him/her prepare for the presentation. This is like pouring salt into your wounds. As far as you are concerned, it seems like the boss realizes he/she doesn't really know what he/she is talking about and needs your guidance on what to say to get the project approved. This is just more proof, as far as you are concerned, of whose idea this really was in the first place.

You realize that you need to be careful how hard you push on this point. You could do more harm than good to your career by pursuing your claim of ownership of this idea. It was evident in your discussion of this subject with your boss that he/she is not willing to share the "spotlight" with you on this idea, unless it is unsuccessful. Then you expect that you will get the full credit as the originator!

During the role play, you need to decide how you will approach this issue and if you even want to continue to claim your rightful ownership of this great idea.

Activity 7

Healthy Choices—Role Play

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

We play many roles as we face the ethical paradoxes of our lives. An effective teaching tool to learn more about how to deal with these challenging situations is through role playing. Role playing allows us to simulate real life situations in the “safety” of the training environment. Through role playing, we can learn valuable lessons without having to “pay the price” of life’s real consequences. Role playing provides an excellent opportunity for people to come face-to-face with hypothetical questionable ethical situations and explore how they might react if it were real life.

The scenario for this role play is general in nature. In other words, the work setting and details of the positions and people involved are not specifically identified. Suggest to participants that it would be helpful to transpose their own work setting and examples into the roles that they play in this exercise. They should feel free to customize the role play as much as needed in order to adapt it to real life examples with which they are most comfortable and familiar.

DESCRIPTION

The role play involves a disagreement between the chief operating officer and the head of environmental compliance concerning what actions a company should take concerning emissions of a potentially harmful chemical from their facilities into the environment. However, to date this chemical has yet to be regulated, making the dilemma even more difficult.

TIME

45 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 7 Handouts: Part 1—Chief Operating Officer’s Role and Part 2—Head of Environmental Compliance’s Role

Activity 7 (continued)

PRESENTATION

Read the following to participants to introduce the role play:

Most companies have a policy that states their commitment to ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of their employees and the communities in which they operate. When it comes to the protection of the environment, these policies are made even more critical by the countless governmental regulations that exist to ensure compliance with these laws. However, despite the growing number of complex regulations promulgated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there still remain many “gray areas” concerning compliance. This paradox often falls not upon the EPA, but the manufacturer of a product to monitor and regulate themselves according to their own ethical standards. Companies may often become aware of a potential hazard they are creating that puts the general public and environment at risk and have to make difficult decisions concerning what actions should be taken to correct the problem. In many cases, there may be no regulations against these hazards. If this sounds like the “fox watching the hen house,” it is! This role play involves this very situation.

Sometimes people’s viewpoints concerning ethics can be surprising. This role play involves the chief operating officer, who wants the company to voluntarily reduce their emissions of a potentially harmful substance, meeting the head of the company’s environmental compliance programs, who does not want to take any action at this time.

Divide participants into pairs. Let each pair decide what part each person will play. Each participant in this role play should be given the Activity 7 Handout for his or her part. After they have been given adequate time to review their part, the role play is to begin. When the role play is completed, review the discussion points that follow.

DEBRIEFING

1. What are the “gray areas” in this situation concerning the continued release of this substance into the environment?
2. Is it unethical to continue to do something about which there is still debate as to whether it is harmful or not, as was the situation in this story?
3. Is there really a financial justification to not taking any action at this time?
4. Is either of these two people’s positions on this issue totally right or wrong?
5. Have you ever found yourself in a similar paradoxical situation concerning what you should do?

Activity 7 Handout

Healthy Choices—Role Play

Part 1: Chief Operating Officer's Role

As the newly appointed top official responsible for the company's manufacturing operations, you have asked for detailed reports concerning compliance to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations. As you review this information, you become concerned about the emissions levels of a certain chemical at several of the company's factories. Because you have a strong technical background in this area, you are very knowledgeable about this chemical's possible effects, not only on the environment but the long-term health of the people exposed to this substance. You are also aware that several other related substances are under study by the EPA as being potentially hazardous, but to date, no regulations exist concerning their emissions. This means that at least at the present time there are no limitations on how much of these substances can be discharged from the company's manufacturing facilities. In fact, due to contradictory reports on these substances, it may be a number of years before this controversy is resolved.

However, it is your personal opinion based on the reports that you have studied that these are very potentially harmful substances that in time will be strictly regulated. You believe that your company needs to begin taking aggressive action to reduce and possibly eliminate the emissions of these substances from the company's factories regardless of what the present or future regulations may or may not be. There is, you believe, substantial evidence that indicates that these are very potentially harmful chemicals being released into the communities in which your factories are located. You strongly believe that the organization has an ethical and moral obligation to go beyond what governmental regulations require to protect the environment and health of the general public.

You are also aware that not everyone in the company may feel this way. Compliance to government regulations already costs the company many millions of dollars each year. To propose that the company add to these considerable expenditures will not be something others will want to hear, particularly with profits down during the past year.

In this role play, you are meeting with the head of the company's environmental compliance programs. He/she has already taken the position that because it is still uncertain what the potential effects of these substances are on the environment, no action to reduce these emissions levels at any of the company's factories should be taken at this time.

Even though the person you will be talking with in the role play now reports to you in your new position, you still would like to have his/her support for taking these actions. You realize that without this person's support, it would be more difficult to successfully achieve your objective of reducing or possibly eliminating the company's emissions of this harmful substance.

Activity 7 Handout

Healthy Choices—Role Play

Part 2: Head of Environmental Compliance's Role

As head of the company's environmental compliance programs, your main responsibility is to ensure that the company meets all local, state, and federal environmental rules and regulations. With the number of products that the organization's manufacturing facilities produce, this can be a very complex and difficult job.

Today, your new boss who was recently appointed chief operating officer of the company has asked for a meeting to discuss the emissions of a particular substance that currently is not regulated. There are several conflicting reports concerning this substance, and until this controversy is cleared up, the government has chosen not to regulate its use or emissions.

It is your opinion that in many instances these governmental regulatory agencies go overboard in restricting the emission levels of many chemicals to the point that staying in total compliance is becoming nearly impossible. Companies are being asked to be able to measure and monitor levels so small that this cannot be achieved, even with today's advanced technology.

You feel the company already has so many challenges ahead to meet the standards that are presently in place that it cannot afford to focus its resources on that which is not yet regulated at this time. You have been getting a great deal of pressure from the Executive Committee of the company (for which your new boss now is the chairperson) to stay within the budgets established for environmental compliance. You are certain that pursuing this project will cause you to be even more unfavorable in this budget by several million dollars.

Your objective during this meeting is to try to convince your new boss that the company already has enough problems trying to stay in compliance with those regulations that already exist without trying to comply with those that are still being debated. You understand that it is within his/her authority to order you to begin this project, but this level of expense will require the approval of the Executive Committee. Without your support, approval on this issue may be less likely to be granted, particularly considering its financial implications.

Activity 8

The Opportunity—Role Play

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

We play many roles as we face the ethical paradoxes of our lives. An effective teaching tool to learn more about how to deal with these challenging situations is through role playing. Role playing allows us to simulate real life situations in the “safety” of the training environment. Through role playing, we can learn valuable lessons without having to “pay the price” of life’s real consequences. Role playing provides an excellent opportunity for people to come face-to-face with hypothetical questionable ethical situations and explore how they might react if it were real life.

The scenario for this role play is general in nature. In other words, the work setting and details of the positions and people involved are not specifically identified. Suggest to participants that it would be helpful to transpose their own work setting and examples into the roles that they play in this exercise. They should feel free to customize the role play as much as needed in order to adapt it to real life examples with which they are most comfortable and familiar.

DESCRIPTION

In this role play, a potential employer is interviewing a candidate for a position with the company. Both are trying very hard to make a great impression on each other. In this case, perhaps they might be trying too hard. In the role play, each person must make decisions concerning how honest he or she needs to be with the other during this job interview.

TIME

45 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 8 Handouts: Part 1—Interviewer’s Role and Part 2—Candidate’s Role

Activity 8 (continued)

PRESENTATION

Read the following to participants to introduce the role play:

A job interview presents many ethical dilemmas to both the interviewer and the candidate for employment. Both want to make the most favorable impression possible on each other. Here again we find there are many gray areas that must be considered as people strive to reach their goals. For example, to what degree does the interviewer “sell” the company and the career opportunity it has to offer? Who really knows just how far in the organization someone just being hired might aspire? There are countless real life examples of people who have started at modest levels of an organization and risen to the very pinnacle of power. Of course, not everyone can expect that this would be his or her career path, but it does open the door to promise. A company does not want to lose top candidates to the competition because they failed to give him or her enough incentive to want to come to work for them. Where this presentation crosses the line between fact and fantasy will always be unclear.

Similarly, the interviewee doesn’t want to sell him-/herself short either. Resume “inflation,” as it is often called, is sometimes a common practice among job seekers. Again, where does accuracy and honesty become separated? Wouldn’t a job candidate be doing him-/herself a great injustice if they “under” describe their responsibilities and accomplishments?

It is probably safe to say that there is some enhancement of both career opportunities and candidate qualifications in almost every job interview. The ethical paradox is in the degree to which this phenomenon occurs. In the following role play, this setting for this paradox is created.

In this role play, participants must decide for themselves how they should best present what they have to offer each other and to what degree they are comfortable with their ethics relating to the accuracy of the information they share with each other.

Divide participants into pairs. Let each pair decide what part each person will play. Each participant in this role play should be given the Activity 8 Handout for his or her part. After they have been given adequate time to review their part, the role play is to begin. When the role play is completed, review the discussion points that follow.

Activity 8 (continued)

DEBRIEFING

1. What ethical responsibilities do you believe the company has to this candidate to share the information about the possible effect the proposed regulations could have on their future and their employees' careers?
2. What ethical responsibility does the candidate have to share the fact that if the company can't realistically offer long-term growth, he or she would feel very differently about working for them?
3. Is the information in the candidate's resume completely honest? Why or why not?
4. Is it legitimate for this candidate to take full credit for the increases in sales of the accounts that he/she is now responsible for?
5. Is the candidate's desire to change companies the real indication of how this person might behave in the future if hired with this company and the new regulations do come into existence? If so, how should this influence the prospective employer's hiring decision about this candidate?
6. What other ethical paradoxes have you experienced concerning the interviewing and hiring process?

Activity 8 Handout

The Opportunity—Role Play

Part 1: Interviewer's Role

In this role play, you are playing the part of the interviewer representing a medium-sized company looking for entry-level management candidates. Your company is in a dynamic industry and has very good growth potential. Your company is finding that there is fierce competition for the top young candidates in the marketplace today. In fact you have recently had several candidates who you really were excited about hiring, turn down your job offers. The continued success and growth of the company is dependent to a great extent on its ability to attract and retain this type of leadership potential for the future.

Yesterday, you were at a meeting with several of the top executives of the company to discuss this problem and develop a strategy to deal with it. You were given a report and fact sheet to review, which highlighted the benefits and advantages to prospective candidates of working for the company. Obviously, the top management of your company is trying to make a positive impression on these next candidates who are to be interviewed concerning career growth potential. A new extensive orientation program for new management trainees has also been developed and the training program has been improved. Everyone seems to be getting more and more impatient to get these new candidates on board and this process underway.

You have tried to find out as much as possible about the candidate you will be interviewing. You also have reviewed the reports concerning the reasons that the previous candidates stated they decided to accept employment with a different company. In preparation for the role play interview, you are provided with the following information:

- The company has had record profits for the past four years.
- During this same period, the company has grown by 25 percent.
- This growth and profitability has created many excellent career opportunities for both current and new employees.
- Projections for the continued future growth of the company still appear to be good.
- However, there are still questions concerning pending legislation that could cause government regulations to have a negative effect on this growth.

Activity 8 Handout Part 1 (continued)

- Because of the complexity of the business your company is in, it requires several years for a new management candidate to really gain an adequate understanding of the markets you serve as well as the many already existing regulations that affect the operation.

Thus, it is important that prospective candidates show an interest in staying with the company for at least five years and hopefully more. This has been a problem for the company with past new hires as several of the most talented people hired recently have left for other opportunities after only a year or two. You have been told not to talk about the issue of the pending regulations with the candidates you interview. You are concerned about this because you don't think that it would be right not to share this important information with them. You discussed this with your supervisor, and he said that the company understands its responsibility to be open and honest with job candidates, but at the same time does not want to scare off the best ones based on something that might never even happen. He conceded that if you felt that strongly about it that you might mention the proposed legislation, but to stress that no one knows if it will pass or not. However, your boss ended your conversation with him on this subject by stressing that the company did not want to lose the candidate you will be interviewing based on this issue.

In this role play, don't spend a great deal of time going through the candidate's background that you will see on the abbreviated resume below. For the sake of time, focus only on the candidate's last job experience that directly relates to the position he/she is applying for with your company.

Activity 8 Handout Part 1 (continued)

RESUME (abbreviated)

Name: Joe/Jane Candidate

Education: Top University

Degree: Business Administration

GPA: 3.7

Graduation Date: 2 years ago

Activities: Sports teams, professional organizations and clubs, class officer

Work Experience: XYZ Company

Position: Management Trainee

Responsibilities: Received broad exposure to a number of areas of operations and marketing functions of the company. Presently managing a small sales function supervising two employees.

Dates of Employment: Graduation from college to present

Personal: Paid for own education working part time during college. Open to relocation, hard working, ambitious, and outgoing. Career objective is to work for a company offering unlimited career growth potential.

Activity 8 Handout

The Opportunity—Role Play

Part 2: Candidate's Role

As indicated on your resume, you graduated from college two years ago. You did well in school finishing your degree with a 3.7 grade point average. However, this might not be quite as good as it sounds as your college had a 5.0 grading scale. You should only share this fact if the interviewer asks what the grading scale was at your college. You were involved in a number of activities in college. However, in a number of these activities, your involvement and participation was minimal, but never the less can still be legitimately listed on your resume. You had to work part time during college to pay for your tuition and living expenses and this took away some of your ability to focus entirely on school and other activities.

You have worked for a small company as a management trainee since graduation from college. It has been a good experience and you have been given increasingly more important responsibilities. For the past nine months, you have been assigned sole responsibility for several key customer accounts. You have an administrative support person who reports to you in this new assignment. Since you received this assignment, sales have increased in all of your accounts. You should stress this during your interview with your prospective employer today. However, sales during the same period for the whole company have also significantly increased due to the demand in the market for the company's product as a result of a major advertising campaign recently launched. Regardless, you still feel that your efforts were responsible for the success that you have had in increasing the sales in these accounts as you have worked hard during this time to better meet the requirements of these customers. It is up to you to present your perceptions of why the sales in your accounts have increased since you have taken them over.

You are looking for a career opportunity that can offer you greater career growth than your present employer. Although your present employer's business is doing well, you don't believe that they will ever be able to provide the growth potential that the company you are interviewing with today. In this role play, you are to stress this point and ask the interviewer to tell you about this growth potential with the company. You are most interested in the longer-term potential of the company and what opportunities this might create for its employees. This is a very important point to you. You feel that you have already taken a job just to gain business experience and would like to find an employer that you could stay with for a long time—hopefully for the rest of your career. You are hoping that the company you are interviewing with today will be able to offer this type of long-term career growth opportunity. From everything you have heard and researched about the company, you have every reason to believe that they can offer this potential.

Activity 8 Handout Part 2 (continued)

You have talked to several other potential new employers and even have an offer with one that you are seriously considering. They have offered you a good opportunity, but you still believe that the company you are interviewing with today might be able to offer more long-term potential. You have been up front with the other company and told them that you would make your decision after this interview. You should also mention the other offer to the company you are interviewing with today. Make clear that your decision will be based on the company you feel has the greatest long-term career growth potential.

Activity 8 Handout Part 2 (continued)

RESUME (abbreviated)

Name: Joe/Jane Candidate

Education: Top University

Degree: Business Administration

GPA: 3.7

Graduation Date: 2 years ago

Activities: Sports teams, professional organizations and clubs, class officer

Work Experience: XYZ Company

Position: Management Trainee

Responsibilities: Received broad exposure to a number of areas of operations and marketing functions of the company. Presently managing a small sales function supervising two employees.

Dates of Employment: Graduation from college to present

Personal: Paid for own education working part time during college. Open to relocation, hard working, ambitious, and outgoing. Career objective is to work for a company offering unlimited career growth potential.

Activity 9

Ethical Matters of Degree

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

To illustrate that ethics is often a matter of degree. The difference may be in people's perceptions of what is or is not a violation of the organization's ethical policy or even their own personal ethical standards.

DESCRIPTION

Pairs of potential violations of ethical policies are presented. Participants are to decide to what degree each example would be a violation of an ethical standard. The first of each pair presented is intended to be an example of something that might not be perceived to be as serious of an ethical violation. The second example is intended to be an example of a more serious problem.

TIME

30 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 9 Handout—Ethical Matters of Degree Questionnaire

PRESENTATION

1. Introduce the activity by explaining that ethics is often a matter of degree. The same behavior may be viewed very differently depending on the degree of the violation. This is why ethics can seem like such a paradox.
2. Explain that in this activity, the participants will be asked to evaluate pairs of potential ethical violations. They are to decide if each one is acceptable, unacceptable, or questionable.
3. Tell participants that the answers to these questions will be discussed as a group after completion of the activity.

Activity 9 (continued)

DEBRIEFING

1. After everyone has completed the questionnaire, instruct participants to score their answers according to the following scale:

Each Unacceptable answer is worth 10 points

Each Questionable answer is worth 5 points

Each Acceptable answer is worth 2 points

Double the points for each response in part b for each question

A perfect score would be 360 points. Ask how many received this top score.

2. Remind participants that based upon your perceptions, values, and ethics, there are many different ways these questions can be answered. The suggested responses to these questions are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. a) questionable
b) unacceptable | 7. a) questionable
b) unacceptable |
| 2. a) acceptable
b) unacceptable | 8. a) questionable
b) unacceptable |
| 3. a) acceptable
b) unacceptable | 9. a) questionable
b) unacceptable |
| 4. a) questionable
b) unacceptable | 10. a) questionable
b) unacceptable |
| 5. a) questionable
b) unacceptable | 11. a) acceptable
b) unacceptable |
| 6. a) questionable
b) unacceptable | 12. a) questionable
b) unacceptable |

3. Ask participants which questions they disagree with the suggested answers and why.
4. What are some ways that the ethics of these situations might have been changed to either being acceptable or unacceptable?
5. How fine a line was there in some of the situations described in these questions? What are some examples?

Activity 9 Handout

Ethical Matters of Degree Questionnaire

Answer each of the following questions as being either acceptable, unacceptable, or questionable (gray areas) concerning ethics. Assume that there was no permission requested or granted in any of these examples.

1. a) Every spring at tax time, an employee makes a copy of his personal tax return on the company's duplicating machine.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) A parent makes 2,000 copies of her son's soccer league's schedule on the company's duplicating machine.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
2. a) An employee calls home from work to check to see if her middle school child has gotten safely home from school each day.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) Using the company's telephone to call your cousin who lives across the country to say "hello."
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
3. a) An employee brings home a ballpoint pen in her pocket by mistake from work.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) An employee supplies pens and pencils to a civic organization he belongs to from the company's office supply cabinet.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
4. a) Making promises to a potential customer about extra services that the company will provide to get their business.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) Lowering your price below the competition's, but within a range where you can still realistically make a profit to bring in more business.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable

Activity 9 Handout (continued)

5. a) Exaggerating how much progress you have made on a big project to your boss.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) Projecting unrealistic “best case scenario” numbers on a business forecast report.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
6. a) Calling in sick to work just to get away from the pressures of the job for a day.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) Leaving work early and asking a co-worker to “cover” for you by answering your telephone so nobody will know.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
7. a) Accepting a small gift from a potential supplier who is hoping to get your business.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) Selecting suppliers who happen to invite you on golf outings and dinners at expensive restaurants.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
8. a) An employee often fails to take all of her rest breaks during the shift in order to keep up with orders.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) An employee puts on his safety glasses every time he sees his supervisor coming then removes them once the boss is gone.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
9. a) A salesperson who regularly travels on company business always selects one particular airline to get free frequent flier tickets even though this airline is usually more expensive than others available.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) An employee adds travel expenses that he never had on his expense reimbursement report.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable

Activity 9 Handout (continued)

10. a) A politician fails to live up to campaign promises after being elected to office.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) A government purchasing agent awards highway construction contracts to a firm that just happened to be building a new home for him.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
11. a) A patient lies to her physician about the amount of fat she eats in her diet.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) A candidate for employment falsifies some of his health history in order to pass the physical required as part of the company's selection process.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
12. a) An employee buys stock in the company's biggest competitor because he realizes how much better managed they are than his organization.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable
- b) A CEO of a large corporation accepts a multi-million-dollar salary incentive bonus for a year in which the company lost an unprecedented amount of money forcing layoffs of 30 percent of its employees.
☐ Acceptable ☐ Unacceptable ☐ Questionable

Activity 10

What Would You Do?

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

To challenge participants to think about what they might do if presented with certain situations in which they must make ethical decisions regarding their own behaviors.

DESCRIPTION

Participants are presented a series of scenarios in which they are given choices to make concerning what they might do in the given situation. The choices that they are given for each question are progressively more ethical. In other words, in each question, the first choice is intended to be the least ethical response and the last choice the most ethical.

TIME

30 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 10 Handout—What Would You Do? Questionnaire

PRESENTATION

1. Explain to participants that we are often faced with many ethical dilemmas in which we must make difficult decisions concerning ethics.
2. Distribute the questionnaire, What Would You Do? to each participant.
3. Instruct participants to read each question and then select the answer that best describes what they would do if they found themselves in that situation.

Activity 10 (continued)

DEBRIEFING

1. Instruct participants to score their answers according to the following scale:

Each answer A is worth 0 points
Each answer B is worth 2 points
Each answer C is worth 5 points
Each answer D is worth 10 points

A perfect score would be 160 points. Ask how many in the class received this score.

2. Explain that as can be seen by the above scoring key, each of the answers A, B, C, and D were intended to be progressively more ethically acceptable. Do you agree that this was true in all of the situations described in the questionnaire? Why or why not?
3. Ask participants if they have ever found themselves in similar situations to the ones described in this activity. Ask participants to share these experiences. However, be careful not to force anyone to share information with the group that might make him or her feel uncomfortable in front of the rest of the group.
4. Ask those who volunteered to share their own similar experiences if he or she did something different than suggested in the four options presented in the activity. Again, be careful not to force anyone to share something he or she would be uncomfortable disclosing in front of the group.
5. Ask what was the outcome or result of these actions.
6. Ask the group, "If you find yourself in a similar circumstance in the future, how might you react differently?"

Activity 10 Handout

What Would You Do? Questionnaire

Choose the answer that best represents what you think you would do in each of the following situations.

1. An e-mail message is sent to you by mistake that contains confidential information that could be very helpful to you on a big project you are working on. Before you begin reading the memo, it is clear to you that it was not intended for you to see.

You would:

- A. Read the memo then forward it to the intended recipient.
- B. Read the memo and send it back to the originator.
- C. Send the memo to the intended recipient unread with a note acknowledging that it was sent to you by mistake.
- D. Send the memo unread to the originator with a note acknowledging that it was sent to you by mistake.

2. A parts supplier to your company offers you the same “deal” he had with the buyer who previously had your job. The supplier would invoice the company for products never delivered and then split the payment with the buyer after the bill was paid.

You would:

- A. Take the same deal.
- B. Tell the supplier that you are not interested.
- C. Switch suppliers.
- D. Report this information to your supervisor.

3. At a social event you recently attended, an acquaintance unaware that you are now working for a competitor tells you something about his employer’s business that could give your company a competitive advantage.

You would:

- A. Continue to encourage the acquaintance to tell you more about his company’s business.
- B. Share confidential information about your employer with this person.
- C. Walk away and ignore this information.
- D. Tell the person whom you work for and that it is not appropriate for you to hear or discuss this information.

Activity 10 Handout (continued)

4. You accidentally overhear your boss saying that he is planning on terminating one of your co-workers as part of a corporate downsizing program. This person happens to be a good friend of yours who you know is just about to close a deal on an expensive new home.

You would:

- A. Tell other people other than this person what you heard.
- B. Tell your friend what you heard.
- C. Do nothing.
- D. Talk to your boss about what you heard and your friend's plans to buy a new house.

5. You see an advertisement in the newspaper for a product you have been looking for at a fantastic price. You rush to the store to purchase it, but the owner tells you that the ad was a misprint and they couldn't possibly sell the product at that price because he would lose money. The best that he says he can do is to give you a discounted price that is fairer to him and would not cause him to lose money on the sale.

You would:

- A. Insist that the store honor their advertised price, and buy a number of the products.
- B. Buy one of the products at the advertised price.
- C. Accept the store's offer to buy the product at a discounted price, but not as low as advertised.
- D. Accept the store's apology and don't insist on buying the product at any reduced price.

6. A co-worker makes a computation error on a big report that could have significant negative consequences on your department's performance for the year. In fact this is not the first time that he has made this kind of mistake. You catch the error before the report is submitted and point it out to your co-worker who makes the necessary corrections. Later you hear your boss mention how pleased she was with your co-worker's report and its accuracy.

You would:

- A. Tell your other co-workers about the mistake and how you discovered it.
- B. Not say anything to anyone about the incident.
- C. Tell your boss about the mistake.
- D. Suggest to your co-worker that he tell the boss about the mistake and how it was found and corrected.

Activity 10 Handout (continued)

7. You are told by your boss that you will be considered for a promotion if you go out on a date with him/her.

You would:

- A. Accept the date.
- B. Turn down the offer to go on a date.
- C. Tell your boss that this is an inappropriate offer, and if repeated, you will report him/her.
- D. Report your boss's actions to the appropriate officials in your organization.

8. A mistake is made processing your last expense account statement overpaying you by a significant amount. You call the accounting department and you are told by the person who made this mistake that it would be too much trouble to correct and to keep the money as nobody will ever know the difference.

You would:

- A. Find out if the accounting clerk was right about no one being able to find out if you kept the money then decide what to do.
- B. Based on what the accounting clerk told you, cash the check and keep the money.
- C. Return the check and ask for the correct amount to be sent to you.
- D. Report the clerk's error and attitude about the mistake to the appropriate officials in your organization.

9. You begin getting a pay movie channel on TV at home by mistake without being charged by the cable company.

You would:

- A. Enjoy your favorite movies without paying for them.
- B. Simply not watch the channel.
- C. Wait a few months until you have gotten a chance to see if you like the channel or not before reporting this to the cable company.
- D. Report the mistake to the cable company right away.

10. You have been trying to sell your house for a long time. You finally have a prospective buyer. You debate with yourself if you should tell the buyer that you have had problems with water in your basement.

You would:

- A. Not say anything for fear of losing the sale.
- B. Admit that you have had water in the basement, but minimize the extent of the problem.
- C. Tell the buyer about the water, but offer to do nothing to address the problem.
- D. Tell the buyer about the water problem in the basement and offer to have it corrected as part of the sale.

Activity 10 Handout (continued)

11. Despite having a number of excellent female and minority candidates for an important position that your company is about to fill, you hear that none of these people are being considered for the job. You realize that neither women nor minorities hold any of the key positions in the organization. As a vice-president of the company, you are concerned about the potential consequences of this employment practice. When you ask around as to why this is the case, you are told in confidence that the CEO of the company will not approve the promotion to key positions of any females or minorities.

You would:

- A. Do nothing.
 - B. Try to get more information about this situation and practice of the organization.
 - C. Find out more about the potential problems this could create for the organization.
 - D. Go to the CEO and share your concerns about this practice not only from a legal standpoint but an ethical one as well.
12. You are in a gift shop with your four-year-old child who accidentally breaks an expensive glass. However, the storeowner was in the back of the store and neither she nor anyone else is aware this has occurred.

You would:

- A. Immediately leave as if nothing has happened.
 - B. Clean up the broken glass but still not tell the storeowner.
 - C. Scold the child.
 - D. Tell the storeowner and offer to pay for the glass.
13. You are at a four-way stop sign late at night. As you approach the intersection, you can clearly see that there are no other cars anywhere in the area.

You would:

- A. Not even slow down as you go through the intersection.
- B. Slow down as you go through the intersection.
- C. Slow down almost to a stop but not completely.
- D. Come to a complete stop at the intersection.

Activity 10 Handout (continued)

14. One of the best employees you have working in your department tells you that she is resigning to go to work for another company for a higher paying position and more responsibility. You were just about to offer a comparable job to another employee who also works for you. You believe that the person who is planning on leaving would stay with your company if you offered this position to her instead of to the employee you originally had selected.

You would:

- A. Offer the job to someone other than these two people mentioned above if you could not decide which one of these two candidates should get the job.
 - B. Offer the promotion to the employee who was planning on leaving in hopes that she would decide to stay with the company.
 - C. Offer the position to the person you originally intended.
 - D. Stay with your initial decision concerning to whom to offer the job and then talk to the employee who is planning on leaving to find out more about why she is looking for a different job and what might be changed to get her to stay with the company.
15. While traveling on business, you see a top executive of your company checking into a motel with someone you know is not this person's spouse. The executive recognizes you and obviously is very embarrassed. The executive calls you to the side and tells you that if you ever tell anyone about this incident, you will be fired.

You would:

- A. Ask for a better paying job in return for your silence.
 - B. Start a rumor about the executive's extra marital affair.
 - C. Tell the executive that what you saw has nothing to do with you and that you will honor the request not to tell anyone but you do not appreciate having your job threatened because of this situation in which you did nothing wrong.
 - D. Report the executive's threat to the appropriate officials in your organization.
16. You are playing golf in a foursome with an important customer who takes the game very seriously and is extremely competitive when he plays. As you begin the final hole, you both have the same score. He hits his drive into the woods. As you bring the electric cart to where he is about to hit his second shot, you see the customer pick up his ball and throw it to a much better position for his second shot. He doesn't realize that you saw him cheating in this manner.

You would:

- A. Do the same thing with your next shot.
- B. Accuse the customer of cheating.
- C. Do nothing.
- D. Make your presence known so that he realized you might have seen his illegal movement of the ball.

Activity 11

Shades of Gray Experiences

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

To challenge participants' own perceptions and values concerning their ethical standards and behaviors.

DESCRIPTION

Participants are asked if they have ever done any of the questionable ethical things described in the questionnaire.

TIME

30 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 11 Handout—Shades of Gray Experiences Questionnaire

PRESENTATION

1. Explain to participants that this activity is one that will be kept private. No one will be asked to share any of his or her answers to the questions asked in this activity that they do not want to. As the facilitator or leader of this activity, you need to ensure that the confidentiality of this activity is maintained. Participants should keep possession of their questionnaire at all times.
2. Tell participants that this activity's purpose is for each person to challenge and explore their own past ethical behaviors. Ask participants to answer the questions as honestly as possible. Reassure participants that their answers are for their eyes only and are intended to be a self-awareness activity.

DEBRIEFING

1. Reemphasize that there are many paradoxes concerning ethics in our lives both professionally and personally.
2. Our goal should be to better understand these paradoxes in order to lead our lives according to our individual ethical standards.
3. The purpose of this activity is to help participants understand how this paradox might apply to their own lives.

Activity 11 (continued)

4. After everyone has completed the activity, present the following scoring scale, and have participants use this scale to score themselves. Do not ask participants to share their scores.

Scoring:

A big part of being ethical is honesty. Therefore give yourself 10 points for every question you answered as YES, 5 points for every question you answered as NO, and 0 points for every question you answered as NOT SURE/CAN'T REMEMBER.

Activity 11 Handout

Shades of Gray Experiences Questionnaire

We all experience shades of gray in our daily lives concerning ethical decisions we must make. Read each shade of gray situation that follows. Answer **Yes** or **No** or **Not Sure/Can't Remember** to each question.

Have you ever done this?

1. Given your membership card at a Health Club to a friend or family member to use.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

2. Made a copy of a rented videotape.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

3. Displayed a picture of a relative just before he or she visits your home.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

4. Taken home a magazine from a reception or waiting room.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

5. Said that your child is younger than he or she really is to get a reduced admission price.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

6. Not included all your debts on a loan application to ensure that it would be approved.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

7. Returned an item of clothing to a store that you had already worn, but then decided you didn't like.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

8. Added additional telephone connections in your home without telling the telephone company.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

9. Made a personal long distance call from work without permission.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

Activity 11 Handout (continued)

10. When you were a child, forged your parent's signature on a report card to avoid getting in trouble about your grades.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember
11. Had someone hold your place in a long line while you were waiting to get into somewhere so that you could do something else.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember
12. Switched price tags on an item in a store.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember
13. Not told someone interested in buying a car from you that it had been in an accident at one time.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember
14. Told your doctor that you are eating healthier than you really are.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember
15. Claimed that the airline damaged your suitcase when traveling when in fact it was in that condition when you checked in at the ticket counter.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember
16. Lied about your age to your friends.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember
17. Told other people something shared with you in confidence by someone else.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember
18. Returned a product with a money back guarantee for defects even though there was nothing actually wrong with it.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember
19. Hinted to someone that you really would like to come to his or her party when you know that you wouldn't otherwise be invited.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember
20. "Recycled" a gift that you received but did not like to someone else.
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

Activity 11 Handout (continued)

21. Checked into a hotel registering only you as staying in the room when in actuality there were others also occupying it in order to get a reduced rate.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

22. Given tickets to an event to someone else that you received as a gift but had no interest in attending, but said you went.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

23. Recorded a telephone conversation without telling the other person on the other end of the line.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

24. Kept a free sample you mistakenly received in the mail that was supposed to be sent to a neighbor.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

25. Looked through your child's or someone else's room/office to find out more about his/her personal life.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure/Can't remember

Activity 12

Ethical Policy

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

To evaluate the effectiveness of the formal ethical policies that exist in participants' organization(s).

DESCRIPTION

The Ethical Policy Questionnaire can help participants evaluate the ethics in their organization. It is intended to help participants better evaluate and understand the role ethics presently plays in their organization. The questionnaire looks at a wide variety of factors that can affect the ethics in an organization. Each question is presented to stimulate thought and review many things that may be taken for granted or their importance overlooked.

TIME

20 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 12 Handout—Ethical Policy Questionnaire

PRESENTATION

1. Emphasize the importance of having a formal ethics policy in an organization.
2. Explain that just having a formal ethics policy does not solve all the ethical problems in an organization. However, a formal ethical policy sets the expectations and standards that everyone should strive to achieve.
3. Have participants complete the Ethical Policy Questionnaire.
4. This activity can also be presented in conjunction with Activity 13, The Ethics Policy's Effectiveness, and Activity 14, Ethics Perceptions.

Activity 12 (continued)

DEBRIEFING

1. Ask participants to share some of their responses to the questionnaire.
2. Share the results of these discussions with the Human Resources group in the organization or the appropriate company officials responsible for the organization's ethical policies.
3. Suggest that this questionnaire be sent to everyone in the organization to complete to gain a better understanding of how ethics are perceived by the organization as a whole.

Activity 12 Handout

Ethical Policy Questionnaire

The following formal ethical policy questionnaire can help you evaluate the ethics in your organization.

Directions: Answer the question(s) for each item in the questionnaire.

1. Is there a written policy concerning ethics in your organization's business policies and practices?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. If **yes**, in what form does this policy exist? (Is it in a pamphlet, brochure, letter, bulletin board notice, plaque, etc.?)

3. How widely publicized is this policy?

4. Does everyone in the organization know that it exists?

5. How could this policy be better publicized?

Activity 12 Handout (continued)

6. Who developed this policy?

7. Were they the right people to develop this policy? Why or why not?

8. If there is not a formal written policy concerning ethics in your organization, how can one be developed?

9. Who needs to start this process?

10. How can a formal policy help your organization? In other words, what can it provide for the organization that doesn't exist today?

Activity 13

Ethics Policy's Effectiveness

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

To evaluate the effectiveness of an organization's ethical policies.

DESCRIPTION

Participants are asked to answer a series of questions as honestly and candidly as possible concerning the effectiveness of the ethical policies that currently exist in their organization.

TIME

20 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 13 Handout—Ethics Policy's Effectiveness Questionnaire

PRESENTATION

1. Introduce the activity as being designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the participants' organization's ethics policies.
2. Instruct participants to complete the Ethics Policy Effectiveness Questionnaire.
3. This activity can also be presented in conjunction with Activity 12, Ethical Policy, and Activity 14, Ethics Perceptions.

DEBRIEFING

1. Ask participants to share some of their responses to the questionnaire.
2. Share the results of these discussions with the Human Resources group in the organization or the appropriate company officials responsible for the organization's ethical policies.
3. Suggest that this questionnaire be sent to everyone in the organization to complete to gain a better understanding of how ethics are perceived by the organization as a whole.

Activity 13 Handout

Ethics Policy's Effectiveness Questionnaire

The following questions are intended to evaluate the effectiveness of your organization's ethical policies. Please answer each question as honestly and candidly as possible.

1. How effective would you rate your organization's business ethics policy in influencing people's ethical behaviors on the job?

1
Not At All

2

3
Moderately

4

5
Highly

2. Does a "double standard" exist in your organization concerning what is *said* is important concerning ethics and what is *practiced*?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. If you answered **yes**, what are some examples of how these double standards are applied concerning ethics in your organization?

4. To what extent do you believe your organization is committed to maintaining the ethical standards it has said are important?

1
Little or No
Commitment

2

3
Somewhat
Committed

4

5
Totally
Committed

5. What would be an example of something that recently occurred that would support the commitment rating you just assigned to your organization?

Activity 13 Handout (continued)

6. What could be an example of a time when the organization's ethical policy and practices caused it to sacrifice profit or gain of some kind?

7. Was this a difficult decision for the organization to make? Why or why not?

8. Do you see a longer-term payoff for the sacrifices that may have been made to maintain the ethical standards of the organization? What might these be?

Activity 14

Ethics Perceptions

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

To evaluate the perceptions of ethics in the organization.

DESCRIPTION

Participants are asked to answer the questions in the Ethics Perceptions Questionnaire to gain a better understanding of how ethics are perceived in their organization both from a formal and informal viewpoint.

TIME

20 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 14 Handout—Ethics Perceptions Questionnaire

PRESENTATION

1. Introduce the activity as being designed to evaluate the perceptions of the participants' organization's ethical policies and practices.
2. Instruct participants to complete the Ethics Perceptions Questionnaire.
3. This activity can also be presented in conjunction with Activity 12, Ethical Policy, and Activity 13, The Ethics Policy's Effectiveness.

DEBRIEFING

1. Ask participants to share some of their responses to the questionnaire.
2. Share the results of these discussions with the Human Resources group in the organization or the appropriate company officials responsible for the organization's ethical policies.
3. Suggest that this questionnaire be sent to everyone in the organization to complete to gain a better understanding of how ethics are perceived by the organization as a whole.

Activity 14 Handout

Ethics Perceptions Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions concerning how ethics are perceived in your organization. Answer these questions as honestly and candidly as you possibly can.

1. Are employees comfortable and satisfied with the ethical practices of the organization?

If not, how would people like to see them changed?

2. If employees are not satisfied with the ethical standards of the organization, do they feel able to talk about this issue with their supervisor or some other company representative?

3. Is there someone in the organization who has been given the responsibility for ensuring compliance to the organization's ethical policies?

4. Is this person accessible to everyone on all levels of the organization?

If not, how could this person be made more accessible?

Activity 14 Handout (continued)

5. Would people feel comfortable in reporting violations of the company's ethical policies without fear of reprisal? Why or why not?

6. What are some examples you are aware of when an employee (or yourself) was able to voice his or her concerns about ethics in the organization?

7. What was the result of this report of the ethical problem?

8. How closely tied together are the ethical policies of the organization and the ethical practices of the organization?

9. How can these policies and practices be more consistent with one another?

Activity 15

100 Questions You Should Ask About Ethics in Your Organization

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PURPOSE

To provide participants with a wide variety of questions that could be asked concerning ethics in their organization.

DESCRIPTION

There are 100 different questions in this activity that participants could ask concerning ethics in their organization. The questions are intended to help evaluate both the progress the organization might have made concerning ethics as well as the challenges that lie ahead in this area.

TIME

30 minutes

RESOURCES

Activity 15 Handout—100 Questions You Should Ask About Ethics In Your Organization

PRESENTATION

1. Explain that the 100 questions in this activity are not intended to be all the questions that could be asked of an organization but rather provide a number of thought-provoking reminders of what ethical considerations might need to be reviewed.
2. Ask participants to review the questions and mark any they might like to ask the appropriate people in the organization or gain a better understanding of how the question might be answered.
3. Discuss with the group what some of the questions were that they marked and why they feel these questions are important.

DEBRIEFING

1. Emphasize that there are a great number of considerations to be taken into account when reviewing the ethics of an organization.
2. These 100 questions might not encompass all the various considerations that may need to be taken into account.
3. Ask participants if there are any other considerations not included in these 100 questions that they would also want to ask of their organization concerning ethics.

Activity 15 Handout

100 Questions You Should Ask About Ethics in Your Organization

There are many questions that might be asked concerning ethics. The following are just some of the countless things that you might wonder about as you think about ethics in your organization.

1. Is there a clear ethics policy in place?
2. Who is responsible for the ethics policy in your organization?
3. How are the organization's ethics policies communicated?
4. Are these policies clearly visible?
5. Are the organization's ethics policies communicated to others externally?
6. How does the public view the ethics of the organization?
7. How do your customers view the ethics of the organization?
8. What effect does the organization's ethics have on how it operates its business?
9. Is ethics perceived as a positive or negative factor in the organization?
10. Does the company's reputation for ethics help or hurt its business?
11. Do employees feel confident that the organization will do what is most ethical regardless of the situation?
12. Does the top management of the organization model ethical behavior?
13. Is violation of the company's ethics policies considered a serious problem?
14. Has anyone in recent years been fired for violation of the organization's ethical policies?
15. Have the organization's ethical standards been lowered in the past few years?
16. Is ethics just being given "lip service" in the organization?

Activity 15 Handout (continued)

17. Has anyone refused to do business with your organization because of its ethics?
18. Would the company be willing to sacrifice shorter-term gains to maintain its ethical standards?
19. Has the organization ever received negative publicity due to its ethical practices?
20. Has the organization refused to do business with other companies due to their ethical practices?
21. Has the organization been given public recognition for its ethical practices?
22. Are employees aware of the consequences for non-compliance to the organization's ethical practices?
23. Are goals more important than rules in the organization?
24. Does the organization send out the following message regarding ethics: "Do as I say, not as I do"?
25. Does top management know what ethical behaviors occur throughout the organization?
26. Does ethics seem like a paradox in your organization?
27. Is ethics frequently discussed?
28. Do employees feel comfortable discussing the ethics of the organization?
29. Is there a designated representative who people know they can go to concerning ethical issues?
30. Have the organization's ethics policies ever been reviewed with employees?
31. Are employees required to acknowledge that they have reviewed the organization's ethics policies on an annual basis?
32. Do new employees learn about the company's ethical policies during their orientation?
33. Are new employees required to sign a document stating that they agree to comply with the organization's ethics policies?

Activity 15 Handout (continued)

34. Is ethics part of every aspect of the organization's operation?
35. Do employees feel good about the ethics of the organization?
36. Do customers see the organization's ethical reputation as a positive?
37. Does the organization think of ethics as being good for business?
38. Does the organization refuse to be a supplier to companies it doesn't consider to be ethical?
39. Does the organization support the ethical behavior of its employees?
40. Do the ethical policies and practices of the organization change whenever there is new leadership?
41. Are employees ever discouraged from making ethical decisions?
42. Are ethics more supported by the organization during good financial times than during bad times?
43. Does the ethics of the organization depend on what department or division of the organization you are dealing with?
44. Is there a single ethics "champion" in the organization?
45. Are ethical problems thoroughly investigated by the organization?
46. Does the organization conduct internal audits that evaluate its ethical policies and practices?
47. Is ethics part of everyone's official accountabilities?
48. Would an employee's ethical behavior be a factor in promotional considerations?
49. Could an employee's ethical behavior outside of work affect their career with the organization?
50. Are there "double standards" concerning ethics in the organization?
51. What barriers might exist keeping employees from maintaining the ethical standards of the organization?

Activity 15 Handout (continued)

52. If you could change something about the ethical policies of the organization, what would it be?
53. What do you think your competitors say about the ethics of your organization?
54. If the local newspaper called and said that they were going to write a feature article about the ethics of your organization, how would the company react?
55. What if instead of the local newspaper calling, it was the television show, *60 Minutes* outside the door with their camera crew ready to start filming?
56. What are you most proud of concerning the ethics of your organization?
57. What are you least proud of concerning the ethics of your organization?
58. Have there been situations when others felt that the company was giving too much consideration to ethics?
59. Have there been situations in which others felt the company was giving too little consideration to ethics?
60. Has the ethics of the organization ever caused you to lose a customer?
61. Has the ethics of the organization ever helped you to gain a customer?
62. How do you feel about your personal ethical behavior in business?
63. How would you feel if your family were aware of your personal ethics at work?
64. How would your family feel about your employer's ethical behavior?
65. Who has the greatest influence on your organization's ethics?
66. How effective are governmental regulations on ethics in business?
67. If your company had an ethical problem, who would be responsible for dealing with it?
68. If the department or area in which you work had an ethical problem, who would ultimately be held responsible?

Activity 15 Handout (continued)

69. Would the people you work with know who to go to if they felt an ethical problem existed?
70. Referring to question #69, would they feel comfortable going to this person?
71. Does the organization make known to the general public who they should contact within the organization with questions or concerns about ethics?
72. Does the organization discourage contact within the company concerning problems or questions about ethics?
73. What has been a “defining moment” concerning ethics in your organization?
74. What one event has happened in the past that best describes the ethics of your organization?
75. Is your organization’s reputation for ethics a selling point to do business with the company?
76. What is the best example you can think of concerning how the organization’s ethical policies served it well in a particular situation?
77. Is the organization considered to be a good “corporate citizen” in the communities in which it operates?
78. If the organization were to announce that it was planning on moving into a new community, how would the citizens react to the news?
79. Is there a high level of trust within the organization?
80. Do employees in the organization feel that they need to have everything in writing to ensure that commitments are kept?
81. At what level in the organization are ethical problems most likely to exist?
82. How well known are any ethical problems that might exist in the organization?
83. If all unethical behaviors were to stop immediately in your organization, what effect would this have on the bottom line?
84. Would you mind if your friends were aware of your ethical behavior at work?

Activity 15 Handout (continued)

85. Would you teach your children to conduct themselves the same way you do on your job?
86. What's the worst consequence that could result from unethical practices on your job?
87. Were you taught to perform your job the way you do concerning ethics?
88. If you were to write an ethical policy statement about the job you are performing, what would it say?
89. Do you feel that your ethical standards are the same in your work and personal lives?
90. What might be different if the organization's ethical practices were to change?
91. Who might be most upset by a change in the organization's ethical policies or practices?
92. Who is seen as the "in-house expert" on ethics in your organization?
93. Who is the most critical of the ethics in your organization?
94. How much influence can a single individual have in the way the entire organization is perceived concerning ethics?
95. Who has the most to gain by the organization's commitment to ethics?
96. Who might have the least to gain by the organization's commitment to ethics?
97. If you were to describe the ethics in your organization using another word, what would that word be?
98. What is the best example of the ethics in your organization that you can think of?
99. What is the greatest challenge your organization faces in the future concerning ethics?
100. Who in the history of your organization has had the greatest impact on its current ethical policies, practices, and reputation?